

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton:

We respectfully request that you include in the FY06 Defense Authorization Conference Report a provision that reflects the purposes of the Senate-passed amendment calling for President Bush to put forth a strategy for success for U.S. operations in Iraq and to report to Congress on progress toward the goal of a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty.

On November 15, the Senate, by a broad bipartisan vote of 79-19, adopted that amendment, which was offered by Senators John Warner and Bill Frist. That action, and the amendment itself, sent an important and appropriate message both to the American people and to the Iraqi people. To the American people, the amendment promises that our military commitment to help bring stability to Iraq is not open-ended. To the Iraqi people, the amendment sends the message that Iraq's rival political factions must make the compromises necessary to achieve a stable government, united against the insurgency, and that the Iraqi military will ultimately have to take the lead in securing their own country.

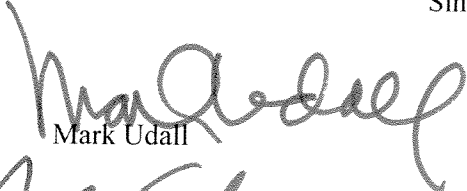

Amendment cosponsor and Senate Majority Leader Frist said the amendment reflects the Republicans' commitment to "a victory strategy." The President welcomed the amendment, calling it a "positive development," and said that it reiterates his strategy in Iraq.



The amendment's chief sponsor, Sen. Warner, commented after the vote that "I personally believe when we can find common ground between the Democrats and Republicans we should do so, and that way to try to reassure and regain confidence in the people that we're doing their business... it occurred to me, that this was an opportunity to try and achieve a measure of bipartisanship and we succeeded." We believe this bipartisan and unifying approach is essential, and we think the House of Representatives can and should send the same messages.

We were led into war as a divided nation and today we are even more divided. A successful withdrawal from Iraq can only be achieved if Congress and the Administration work to bring unity at home. We believe that including the Senate-passed language in the fiscal year 2006 Defense Authorization Conference report would be an important first step toward achieving this unity.

We appreciate your support of our mission in Iraq and the brave men and women serving there. Thank you again for your continued leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,


Mark Udall

Joe Schwarz


Tom Osborne

Ellen Tauscher